

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 260441Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4205

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T SANAA 1745

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, PFOR, YE, YS SA, EG, LY

SUBJ: YAR MILITARY SITUATION

REF: SANAA 1743

1. SUMMARY. YARG SENDING DELEGATION TO SAUDI ARABIA, EGYPT AND LIBYA TO CONSULT ON NEW PDRY BORDER BUILD-UP. I ATTEMPTED COUNTER PRIMIN'S MISGIVINGS ABOUT SAG SUPPORT AND ASSURED HIM OF OUR INTEREST IN YARG' ABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF. END SUMMARY.

2. IN MEETING WITH PRIMIN AT MY REQUEST EVENING AUGUST 24 TO NOTIFY HIM OF AMBASSADOR CRAWFORD'S APPOINTMENT TO CYPRUS, PRIMIN RAISED SUBJECT OF YAR MILITARY SITUATION IN RELATION TO PDRY.

3. PRIMIN TOLD ME REPORTS HAD BEEN COMING IN PAST DAYS FROM VARIOUS MILITARY HEADQUARTERS ALONG BORDER CONCERNING BUILD-UP OF PDRY MILITARY FORCES THERE, INCLUDING ARRIVAL OF HEAVY WEAPONS. YARG HAD DECIDED, IN VIEW ITS MILITARY WEAKNESS, TO COUNTER DIPLOMATICALLY. HIGH LEVEL YARG DELEGATION, COMPOSED OF SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR, MININT LTC MUTAWAKKIL, AND COMMAND COUNCIL MEMBER LTC ABU SHAWARIB LEAVING FOR JIDDA AUGUST 26 TO CONSULT WITH SAG AND INFORM IT OF SITUATION. SHAIKH AL-AHMAR AND LTC MUTAWAKKIL WILL THEN CONTINUE ON TO CAIRO

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AND TRIPOLI FOR SIMILAR TALKS WITH GOE AND LARG. WHILE NOT

SUMMONING THEM, YARG OFFICIALS WERE ALSO INFORMING CHIEFS OF MISSION OF FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS IN COURSE OF REGULAR CONTACTS. IN ADDITION MYSELF, BRITISH, FRENCH, EGYPTIAN AND IRAQI REPRESENTATIVES HAD SO FAR BEEN INFORMED. YARG FEARED FOR BAB AL-MANDEB IN VIEW GROWING SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN AREA THROUGH PDRY AND SOMALIA.

4. PRIMIN AND I THEN HAD A RATHER GENIAL AND RELAXED DISCUSSION ABOUT GENERAL MILITARY SITUATION IN YAR. IN RESPONSE TO HIS MISGIVINGS ABOUT SAG, I TOLD HIM THAT, BASED ON MY EXPERIENCE IN BOTH COUNTRIES, I WAS CONVINCED THAT SAG GENUINELY WANTED TO BUILD UP YARG'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES. WE WOULD BE DISCUSSING MILITARY MATTERS WITH SAG IN NEXT FEW MONTHS AND I FELT SURE QUESTION OF YARG MILITARY FORCES WOULD BE ON AGENDA. I WAS OPTOMISTIC THAT SAG WOULD SOON BE CONSULTING WITH YARG ON ITS NEEDS, PERHAPS BEFORE END OF YEAR. WHILE SAG RESPONSE MIGHT SEEM SLOW TO YARG, IT IMPORTANT TO RETAIN PERSPECTIVE THAT YARG ARMED FORCES MODERNIZATION IS ONLY ONE OF DOZENS OF MAJOR PROJECTS COMPETING FOR SAG'S ATTENTION, INCLUDING VERY LARGE PROGRAMS TO MODERNIZE SAG'S OWN MILITARY FORCES. SAG I FELT WAS DOING ITS BEST AND WAS FULLY AWARE OF POTENTIAL SECURITY DANGER TO IT SHOULD YARG FALL VICTIM TO EXTREMIST ELEMENTS.

5. PRIMIN SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT SAG HAD OTHER CONCERNS. YAKG WAS GRATEFUL FOR DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT IT RECEIVING FROM SAG AGAINST PDRY. BUT IT VERY WORRIED ABOUT YAR'S MILITARY INFERIORITY. WHAT DID I THINK SAG WOULD DO IF PDRY ATTACKED YAR? I RESPONDED THAT SAG HAD ALREADY DEOMONSTRATED ITS DETERMINATION TO LEAD DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FOR YAR IN SUCH AN UNLIKELY EVENT. ON MILITARY SIDE, I SUGGESTED THAT BEST APPROACH IS FOR YARG TO ASK SAG DIRECTLY. WHILE, AS PRIMIN NOTED, SAG HAD NOT INTERVENED DIRECTLY IN 1972 WAR, THAT WAR TO MY KNOWLEDGE HAD BEEN TOUCHED OFF BY SOUTHERN YEMENI EXILES, NOT BY PDRY. IT DID NOT SEEM TO ME, THEREFORE, TO BE A RELIABLE PRECEDENT.

6. I ALSO COMMENTED TO PRIMIN THAT IN VIEW OF FREQUENCY OF THESE INVASION "SCARES," I WONDERED IF PDRY WAS NOT JUST CONDUCTING PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE, RUNNING ITS FORCES UP TO BORDER EVERY TWO
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MONTHS, KNOWING YARG WOULD REACT NERVOUSLY IN VIEW ITS MILITARY INFERIORITY. PRIMIN CONCEDED THIS A GOOD POSSIBILITY, BUT POINTED OUT YARG COULD NOT AFFORD TO IGNORE ANY OF THESE THREATS.

7. IN CLOSING I REMINDED PRIMIN OF OUR STRONG CONCERN THAT YARG RECEIVED MEANS TO DEFEND ITSELF. IN VIEW YAR'S OVERWHELMING ECONOMIC NEEDS AND ENORMOUS FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF NEIGHBORING SAUDI ARABIA, WE COULD NOT JUSTIFY DIRECT

MILITARY AID. WE ARE, HOWEVER, INTENT ON WORKING CLOSELY WITH SAG TO SUPPORT LATTER'S PROGRAMS. PRIMIN RESPONDED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS APPROACH FULLY. CRUCIAL ROLE WAS THAT OF SAG. SO FAR IT HAD NOT PROVIDED USEFUL WEAPONS; ARMS RECEIVED

FROM EGYPT THROUGH SAG FUNDING WERE JUST "SCRAP METAL." I RESPONDED THAT ALL THREE OF OUR GOVERNMENTS WOULD HAVE TO WORK CLOSELY TO MAKE MODERNIZATION PROGRAMS A SUCCESS.

8. COMMENT. PRIMIN WAS SIMPLY AIRING GENERAL SUBJECT IN RELAXED PHILOSOPHICAL MANNER. WHILE UNDERSTANDABLY WORRIED ABOUT YAR'S MILITARY VULNERABILITY, HE IS NOT LEAST BIT ALARMIST ABOUT SITUATION. I BELIEVE HE LARGELY INSTRUMENTAL IN DECISION TO SEND DELEGATION TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM DIPLOMATICALLY.
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